



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

For Your Information...

Pay-As-You-Throw

Never heard of it, right? You're not alone.

Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) is a solid waste management program that charges residents just for the garbage they throw away. PAYT, also known as unit pricing or variable rate pricing, provides a direct economic incentive to reduce waste.

How is that different from what you are paying now?

Traditionally in most communities, residents pay a flat fee (often in your property tax) regardless of the amount of trash they place on the curb or how often it is collected. PAYT programs break that tradition by treating garbage collection just like electricity, gas and other utilities. The less service that you use – that is the less you throw away – the less you pay.

How does it work?

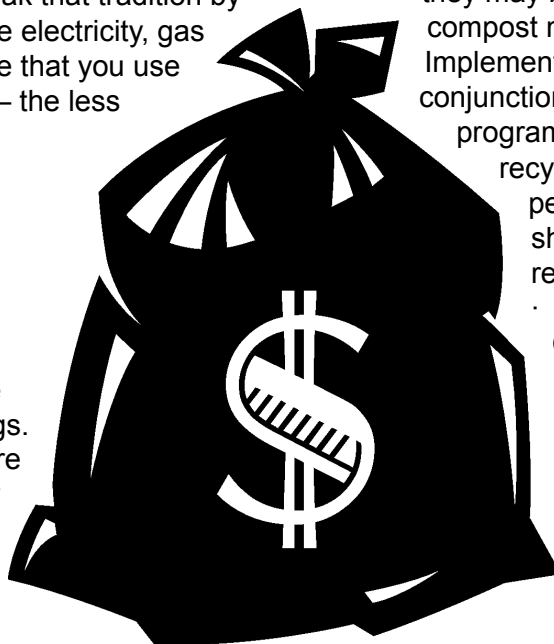
Some communities with PAYT programs charge residents a fee for each bag or can of waste they generate. Some programs charge for tags that can be placed on bags. In other communities, residents are billed based on the weight of their trash. Any way it's done, these programs are simple and fair.

There are thousands of PAYT programs in more than 40 states that vary in size. Some of the largest PAYT programs include: Los Angeles; San Francisco; Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Akron, Ohio. In Minnesota, all communities are required to use a unit-based pricing program. There are more than 200 PAYT programs in Pennsylvania and more than 100 in Massachusetts – many of which are small communities such as Aquinnah, Massachusetts with a population of about 200 people.

What are the advantages of PAYT programs?

PAYT not only provides residents the chance to save money on their trash bill, but also promotes:

- **Fairness.** Residents pay only for the amount of trash they generate. Households generating less trash pay less than households that generate more.
- **Increased Recycling, Composting and Waste Reduction.** As residents come to understand they can pay less for generating less garbage, they may be more likely to recycle and compost more and throw away less. Implementation of a PAYT program, in conjunction with a curbside recycling program, can increase a community's recycling rate between 20 and 27 percent. In addition, PAYT has been shown to decrease a community's residential trash generation rate.
 - Improved Environmental Quality. PAYT programs can improve local recycling programs – and recycling is good for the environment. Recycling reduces the need for new landfills or incinerators. Recycling saves natural resources and energy. Recycling reduces pollution associated with the extraction of raw materials. Recycling reduces greenhouse gas emissions. For more information see the "FYI Environmental/Health Benefits of Recycling" fact sheet.
- **Economic Sustainability.** PAYT also can be an effective tool for local governments struggling to cope with soaring MSW management expenses. Well-designed programs generate the revenues communities need to cover their solid waste



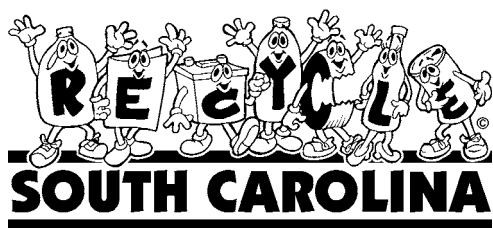
costs, including the costs of such complementary programs as recycling and composting. PAYT programs also may result in reduced collection and disposal costs, reduced transportation costs, and increased revenue for the sale of recyclables.

PAYT programs are not easy to start.

PAYT programs can be fair, increase recycling and protect the environment. So, what's the problem? Why doesn't every community have a PAYT program? Well, there are several obstacles to overcome when considering a PAYT program.

- It's never easy to change. Most residents don't know they pay for garbage collection. Suddenly, it appears there will be a new and direct cost.
- Adverse impact on low-income households. PAYT fees take up a larger percentage of a low-income family's income. Many communities across the country have offered coupon or voucher systems to help reduce collection costs for these households.
- Increases in illegal dumping, litter or open burning. Local government officials are often concerned about the prospect of illegal dumping. Most communities have found that illegal dumping, litter or open burning did not increase after the PAYT program began. This is especially true when communities offer their residents recycling, composting and other programs that allow residents to reduce their waste.

Given those concerns, can a PAYT program be set up? Of course, it can. The program must be sold to key decision makers, public input must be gathered and education provided to everyone to address concerns and misconceptions. Communication and education are the keys to setting up a PAYT program.



PAYT Programs in South Carolina

Currently, there are two communities in South Carolina with PAYT programs.

Darlington County is the only South Carolina county with a county-wide PAYT program. The program, which began in 1994, is completely self-supporting with each homeowner paying a \$35 annual fee as part of their taxes. Residents must place their waste in special bags sold throughout the county at grocery stores, home improvement stores and other locations. The bags cost 50 cents each. The average household generates only one or two bags of trash each week resulting in a cost of \$61 to \$87 per year for solid waste services.

The City of Chester provides residential curbside garbage collection through a variable size roll cart container PAYT program. Residents pay a fee based on the size of the container they choose. Annual fees range from \$84 for a 40-gallon roll cart to \$204 for a 90-gallon roll cart. By reducing waste and recycling, residents have the opportunity to cut their solid waste services fee in half.

Want more information on PAYT?

The U.S. EPA maintains an extensive Web site on PAYT. The site contains detailed information about programs, lessons learned, success stories, fact sheets and other links. In addition, the site contains a tool kit for local governments that includes a guidebook, software and presentation materials. You can visit the site at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/payt.

For more information about PAYT in South Carolina, please call DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling at **1-800-768-7348** or visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle.



**Office of Solid Waste
Reduction & Recycling
1-800-768-7348 ● www.scdhec.gov/recycle**

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